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ALBERTA BIRD ATLAS NEWSLETTER

A Project of the Federation of Alberta Naturalists

Vol. 1, No. 1 **Editor: H. Loney Dickson** **Spring, 1987**

INTRODUCING JOHN R. (JACK) CLEMENTS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ALBERTA BIRD ATLAS PROJECT

Jack comes to the task of Executive Director with a long history of interest in the natural environment. He remembers hikes in the Ontario woods, with his father and brothers, to watch birds and he has kept this interest throughout his adult life. His scholastic background includes degrees from the University of Michigan culminating in a Ph.D. in Forest Ecology. His working career has varied from student jobs of timber cruiser, steel mill hand, photography, and teaching assistant, to employment within the Federal Departments of Forestry and Environment. Here he was Research Officer and later Biological Advisor to the National Energy Board. When he and his family moved west to Edmonton in 1977, it was to take the position of Senior Environmentalist in the Environmental Affairs Department of Syncrude Canada Limited. In 1983 he moved to Fort McMurray to be Senior Environmental Advisor for Syncrude, a position he held till early retirement beckoned.

During all periods of his life, Jack has been involved with both professional organizations and community groups and has held memberships and office in both. He knows and understands what the word volunteer means, yet has the knowledge and skills to raise the funds, organize the project and keep it on track for the next five years.

We welcome Jack Clements to the Alberta Bird Atlas Project. ❑

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Federation of Alberta Naturalists (FAN) is undertaking a project to prepare and publish an atlas of the breedings birds of Alberta. This project will fill the many gaps in the current base of knowledge about the geographical distribution and abundance of birds throughout Alberta. FAN received a strong impetus to initiate such a project from various agencies after the Endangered Species Workshop held in Edmonton, January 1986.

FAN is an organization comprising natural history clubs and individuals interested in furthering natural history objectives in Alberta. Natural history has its roots in our culture, aesthetics, recreation, education and resource management. Wise use and enjoyment of our natural resources offers a wide variety of benefits to Albertans.

This project is being initiated during Wildlife '87, a year of celebration across the country to commemorate the first wildlife reserve designated in Canada 100 years ago. Looking ahead to the beginning of the next 100 years, FAN will provide Albertans with a manageable and systematic framework to become involved in an important contribution to the knowledge, understanding, use and appreciation of one of the province's natural resources. The 6-year project will provide all Albertans with a province-wide, detailed knowledge of the geographical distribution and abundance of birds which breed in the province.

The preparations for the Alberta Bird Atlas will be undertaken in a manner consistent with bird atlas projects in other provinces in Canada, in various states of the U.S.A. and other countries around the world.

The specific objectives of the project, including the published atlas are:

- to provide detailed information which will assist in the management of Alberta's bird species;
- to increase our knowledge pertaining to breeding distribution;
- to collect detailed information from across the province in a standardized format to meet the needs of the publication and to ensure that the information is generally compatible with other atlas projects and usable for future monitoring programs;
- to encourage and facilitate public involvement in wildlife management activities;
- to promote public education and recreation by increasing public awareness and understanding of Alberta's wildlife and its management;
- to create an organizational infrastructure to enable volunteers to participate in this and future natural history projects.

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The information necessary for the preparation of the atlas will be collected by a large number of volunteer bird observers based on the already established, province-wide network of bird enthusiasts. Further, the project will find and welcome other birders not yet involved in the province-wide network, and encourage those who want to become active birders. There will be as many as 2000 volunteers involved during the 6-year life of the project starting in 1987. They will be organized throughout ten regions across the province, each with a regional coordinator. Field observations will be made in a consistent manner on a 20 x 20 kilometer grid throughout the southern part of the province and on a 100 x 100 kilometer grid throughout the northern part of the province. The data will be processed and mapped by means of a computer. Publication of the atlas in 1992 will mark the completion of the project.

The project will be overseen by a management committee. An executive director and technical committees will ensure that the project runs smoothly and competently through the completion of the project.

A newsletter will be published quarterly to keep volunteers and others informed of the progress.

The costs of this volunteer undertaking are substantial, and will be borne in three different ways:

- volunteer efforts, such as time and travel for the myriad field observations and record processing;
- service in kind provided by the participating agencies for various services, such as computer time, software development, technical advice, preparing and editing the newsletter and clerical administration;
- direct expenses to the project for project management and various materials and supplies, such as printing and distributing observations forms and guidelines to volunteers and regional coordinators recognition award, travel expenses, a project manager, and regional review meetings.

The Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation (RPW) granted key financial support to FAN to start the project on its road to success. Other funds, needed to meet the direct expenses of the project, will be raised through a fund raising campaign.

The project has received the encouragement, support and participation of Alberta Fish and Wildlife, the Provincial Museum of Alberta, the Canadian Wildlife Service, and the Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation, all of whom have representation on the management committee. ❑

ALBERTA BIRD ATLAS – MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Alberta Bird Atlas project is supported and sponsored by several primary organizations. For this reason, a management committee comprised of representatives from each organization will direct the project.

Current Members of the Management Committee Include:

Patricia J. Clayton
– Federation of Alberta Naturalists
Douglas F. Culbert, Chairman
– Alta. Forestry, Lands & Wildlife, Fish & Wildlife
Margot Hervieux
– Federation of Alberta Naturalists
Geoffrey L. Holroyd
– Environment Canada, Canadian Wildlife Service
Glen Semenchuk
– Recreation, Parks & Wildlife Foundation
Philip F. Stepney
– Alberta Culture, Provincial Museum ❑

RPW FOUNDATION GRANT

The Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation granted $42,000 to the Federation of Alberta Naturalists to assist with costs of the Alberta Bird Atlas Project. This is a key grant for the project during its first year.

The Foundation was created by an act of the Alberta Legislature in 1976. Its objects are to provide grants to any person or organization for projects which will:

- develop or maintain recreational programs, facilities and services;
- develop or maintain parks;
- manage and conserve fish and wildlife.

During 1986 the Foundation granted a total of $3.5 million to further the objectives.

Pat Clayton, President of FAN said, "We are extremely pleased to have the support of the Foundation for helping us make this important contribution to wildlife conservation in Alberta". ❑

CURRENT STATUS OF THE PROJECT

Now that the proposal for the Alberta Bird Atlas project has been accepted, a major effort is being put into developing an overall strategy for starting up and carrying out the entire project. This involves planning the ways and means to raise funds; maintain and get further support to the project; organize and administer all the activities necessary to make the project a success; select and train a regional coordinator in each region of the province; mobilize the many volunteers; prepare the technical base for the project including the software and hardware for the computer analysis and data summaries; prepare and print the guidelines for the regional coordinators and the volunteer bird observers. The strategy is expected to be finalized before mid-April 1987.

An important part of the project will be a fund raising campaign to raise money to meet direct expenses. An overall strategy for the campaign has been prepared and specific plans are now being developed. If you have any specific ideas please let the Executive Director know.

The Technical Committee, chaired by Dr. Bruce McGillivray, Curator of Ornithology of the Provincial Museum of Alberta, has undertaken various technical tasks such as: identifying the boundaries of the ten regions of the province in a manner that is consistent with the UTM grid system; modifying or developing computer

software for the data handling and analysis, compiling summaries and mapping; defining survey methodology; defining the content and format of field observation forms and; preparing guidelines for atlassers and for regional coordinators.

The Alberta Ornithological Records Committee, chaired by Mr. Al Wiseley, is undertaking the task of developing the criteria for deciding what documents or kinds of observations must be sent for confirmation of rare bird sightings. The criteria upon which confirmation will be judged is also being defined.

The process for selecting regional coordinators is in progress and a brief training session, or sessions, will be planned for sometime this spring. The plans are being developed for reaching out to the birders in the province to welcome them into the atlas project. If you want to become an atlasser or want to help in others ways in the project, contact Jack Clements, Executive Director, ABA Project, Provincial Museum of Alberta, 12856 102 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, T5N 0M6. Phone 403-427-1731. Note that this phone number is in the R.I.T.E. System.

One thing is certain: there is a lot of planning and organizing yet to be done. As soon as we have the specific details in place we will let you know so that you can get started with your own planning, selecting your own squares to observe, or to team up with someone else on a square.

Something else is certain: this is a great way to contribute your bird knowledge and experience for the benefit of all and a great way to start birding if you are one of those who would like to be involved but does not know where or how to start.❑

NEWSLETTER ASSISTANCE

The objectives of the ABA Newsletter is to keep interested people informed on the progress of the project; to provide articles to assist participants in the identification of hard to identify birds and to promote interest in the ABA.

To accomplish these objectives, I encourage ABA participants to write articles for the newsletter: Regional compilers could prepare articles outlining the status of their region's atlasing; participants, or other readers could write articles on how to identify difficult bird species (e.g.: Empidonax flycatchers) and; anyone could write articles on exceptional bird species they have atlased.

Any articles prepared for the newsletter should be submitted to H. Loney Dickson, Editor – ABA, Canadian Wildlife Service, Room 230, 4999 - 98 Ave., Edmonton, Alberta, T6B 2X3.

As Editor, I would also appreciate receiving any comments readers have on the Newsletter; by they comments on style or contents. ❑

BIRD COURSES! BIRD COURSES!

Do you want to take a bird course to learn to identify the birds, to bone up on some skills that might have gone a bit rusty, or to improve upon the skills you already have? Consider taking a course.

Here is a list of some of the courses that will be given this year. Phone numbers are included so that you may phone for more information about registration, dates, fees, etc.:

Fairview and High Prairie	Waterfowl and raptors Late April 1987 Contact: Gord Holton, Peace River 403-624-6405
Blue LkCentre (N. of Hinton)	Alpine Bird Study Spring and Summer 1987 Contact: Blue Lake Centre 403-865-4741
Edmonton	Introduction to Bird Watching April 1987 Instructor: Rainer Ebel Contact: John Janzen Nature Centre 403-434-7446
Edmonton	Beaverhill Lake Tour Spring 1987 Tour Host: Rainer Ebel Contact: John Janzen Nature Centre 403-434-7446
Edmonton	Bird Watching for Seniors Spring 1987 Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta 403-432-3033
Red Deer	Workshop on Cavity Nesting Birds March 1987 Instructor: Peter Sherrington Contact: Myrna Pearman Nature Centre 403-346-2010
Cochrane	Birds of Rocky View April 1987 Instructor: Peter Sherrington Contact: Margaret Westbrook 403-220-3254 (Calgary)
Calgary	Various Bird Courses Throughout the Year Inglewood Bird Sanctuary Contact: Harold Pinel 403-269-6688
Calgary	Birds of the Calgary Area Spring 1987 Instructor: Peter Sherrington Contact: Faculty of Continuing Education, University of Calgary 403-220-4100
Calgary	Various Bird Courses in the Calgary Area Spring and Summer 1987 Contact: Dave Elphinston 403-268-5217

If you are giving a course in bird identification, or know of one not listed above, please contact Jack Clements at the Provincial Museum in Edmonton (phone 427-1731). We want to prepare and distribute a complete list of the bird identification courses in Alberta. Thanks for your help. ❑

MAILING LIST

If you would like to continue to receive the Alberta Bird Atlas Newsletter, please drop a note to: Jack Clements, Executive Director ABA Project, Provincial Museum of Alberta, 12845 102 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, T5N 0M6. If you are signing up to help out with the project itself, you will automatically get the newsletter.

The Editor. ❑

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